

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A mail processing system, comprising:
2 a plurality of trays that are each adapted to hold a plurality of mail items,
3 wherein the mail items in a tray are directed to a common recipient;
4 a plurality of mail processing machines that are adapted to process the mail
5 items, wherein different mail items may take different processing paths through the plurality
6 of mail processing machines; and
7 a tray tag generator that is configured to produce tray tags, wherein each of the
8 plurality of trays is associated with a tray tag, wherein each tray tag includes recipient
9 information identifying processing requirements relating to the recipient of the mail items in
10 the tray associated with the tray tag.

1 2. The mail processing system of claim 1, further comprising readers
2 configured to read information from the tray tags.

1 3 . The mail processing system of claim 2, wherein the readers comprise
2 bar code readers.

1 4. The mail processing system of claim 2, wherein the readers comprise
2 emissive tag readers.

1 5. A mail processing system, comprising:
2 a plurality of trays that are each adapted to hold a plurality of mail items,
3 wherein the mail items in a tray are directed to a common recipient;
4 a plurality of mail processing machines that are adapted to process the mail
5 items, wherein different mail items may take different processing paths through the plurality
6 of mail processing machines;
7 a plurality of tray tags, wherein each tray is associated with a tray tag that
8 includes recipient information identifying processing requirements relating to the recipient of
9 the mail items in the tray associated with the tray tag; and
10 a process management system that is configured to receive processing status
11 information relating to the trays and output the information upon request.

1 6. The mail processing system of claim 5, further comprising at least one
2 reader configured to obtain the process status information by reading information from tray
3 tags.

1 7. The mail processing system of claim 6, wherein the reader comprises a
2 bar code reader.

1 8. The mail processing system of claim 6, wherein the tray tag comprises
2 an emissive tag, and wherein the reader comprises an emissive tag reader.

1 9. A mail processing system, comprising:
2 at least one mail processing machine;
3 a computing device;
4 software that programs the computing device to:
5 receive information relating to the status of a specific process segment
6 of a tray of mail items; and
7 display the status of the specific process segment of the tray of mail
8 items with respect to the mail processing machine; and
9 a tray tag associated with each process segment of a mail drop, wherein the
10 tray tag includes recipient information identifying processing requirements relating to a
11 recipient of the mail items in the process segment.

1 10. The mail processing system of claim 9, further comprising at least one
2 reader configured to obtain process status information from the tray tag associated with each
3 process segment in a mail drop.

1 11. The mail processing system of claim 10, wherein the reader comprises
2 a bar code reader.

1 12. The mail processing system of claim 10, wherein the tray tag
2 comprises an emissive tag, and wherein the reader comprises an emissive tag reader.

1 13. A method of processing mail items, comprising:
2 receiving a mail drop comprising a plurality of trays of mail items, wherein
3 each tray contains mail items for a common recipient;

4 associating each tray with a tray tag, wherein each tray tag includes recipient
5 information identifying processing requirements relating to the recipient;
6 segmenting the mail into a plurality of process segments depending upon
7 certain characteristics of the mail items;
8 processing each of the plurality of process segments through different
9 processes such that each process segment has a status with respect to its process;
10 using the tray tag to periodically update at least one process segment's status
11 information in a process management system, wherein the at least one process segment is
12 from a particular tray; and
13 using the status information of the at least one process segment to manage the
14 processing of a different process segment from the particular tray.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the tray tag includes a bar code for
2 scanning the recipient information from the tray ticket.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein each mail item includes a remittance
2 to the recipient.

1 16. The method of claim 13, wherein the mail is processed by a processor
2 for the recipient according to particular processing standards, and wherein the processor
3 receives compensation from the recipient based on the processor's performance with respect
4 to the standard, and wherein the tray tags include information that identifies the processing
5 standards for the recipient relating to the tray.

1 17. The method of claim 13, wherein the process management system
2 comprises a computing device and software that programs the computing device to:
3 receive information relating to the status of a specific process segment from a
4 tray; and
5 display information relating to the status of the specific process segment from
6 the tray in response to a request from a user.

1 18. A method of processing mail items, comprising:
2 receiving a mail drop comprising a plurality of trays of mail items;
3 associating each tray with a tray tag that includes recipient information
4 identifying processing requirements relating to a recipient of the mail items in the tray
5 associated with the tray tag;

6 processing the mail items through a plurality of processing steps; and
7 periodically using the tray tags to update the status of trays with respect to the
8 processing steps in a processing management system.

1 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of periodically using the tray
2 tags to update the status of trays with respect to the processing steps in a processing
3 management system comprises reading information from the tray tags using a bar code
4 reader.

1 20. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of periodically using the tray
2 tags to update the status of trays with respect to the processing steps in a processing
3 management system comprises reading information from the tray tags using an emissive tag
4 reader.